FIXING UP A BATTLE.

Behind the Scenes at a Melodrama.

THRILLS THAT ARE PLANNED.

A Mysterious Hillside Which Comes and Goes in a Hurry.

Perhaps there has been no spectacular production in New York whereat the stage has been such a mass of people, of effects and of action as is the case in "Burmah." It is a curious combination and one that, though often tried, can generally be weighed in the balance and found wanting in some one respect.

Viewing the play from the front of the house the conditions noted are profoundly impressed upon the auditor. You see a battlefield with the customary grewsome surroundings. There are the dark-faced soldiers, with glittering bayonets, rushing upon the imaginary enemy, though one loses sight of the imaginary fact entirely. Hardly have the senses achieved a realization of this thrilling scene when the queer looking Maxime gun appears, and in a second more is belching forth seeming death at every turn of the crank. One hears the clamor of battle and seems to be in the atmosphere of conflict. Every muscle quivers, every nerve is intense, when suddenly hoof-beats are heard, and across the stage trots a splendid horse.

If the soldiery were looking for a leader they have found one in this animal. Up and up the mountain side you can see him go, all obstructions seeming like wax before him. Breathless you watch his advance. At last the summit is reached and with parting inspiration from the orchestra this equine Sheridan vanishes from sight.

It is a wonderful scene, all this. At first it seems almost a personal insult for any one to suggest that it isn't absolutely true—that all which has been seen is not exactly as represented. To believe that there was nothing but blank cartridges in that gun, that the soldiery dashing hither and thither, that the shrieks of the wounded men, and, far above all, the action of the horse that has enthused every one, are only for effect, only for so many dollars per night, is like the sadness that comes over the child when first it realizes that Santa Claus is a myth.

But it's true. It is only a play, after all. So a Sunday Journal reporter, sitting in the auditorium of the theatre the other evening thought it might be interesting to tell just how all this bogus realism was produced.

Once behind the scenes all the grandeur disappears. It is like a transformation from the Riviera to the Black Forest. One sees a mass of scenery and scene shifters, and people in all sorts of costumes; men who ought to be dead, but refuse to die while in the wings, desperately wounded soldiers, smoking cigarettes and talking to pretty girls, and in fact almost anything and everything that you wouldn't expect to see. All his time the play is going on, and one scene is being built around another.

In "Burmah," as in all thrilling plays, there is a somewhat tame prologue to a very spirited climax. This you realize when back of the foot lights. While the pretty bar maid, in the lobby scene, is holding an animated conversation with the villains, the walls of the theatre seem to be melting away. Not all of them, however, for you can see a few going upward. Then mountains and valleys mysteriously appear, apparently dropping from the skies, so quickly do they shape themselves under the trained fingers of the stage hands. Then comes the hillside. This very rugged and picturesque feature—from the front—resolves itself, behind the scenes, into a series of strong wooden tables, erected in tiers. These tables are covered with mats and padding, with abutments here and there, to enable the performers to find a foothold upon the hillside.

Then after the same fashion is constructed the pathway for the horse, which is a very good horse, indeed, but makes that thrilling trip, not for present gain, but for future reward, with which the smoke of battle has nothing to do whatever. While the horse is making this trip, there are a number of men behind the scenes, of course, whose duty it is to see that nothing gives way under him. A study of detail in this respect removes the last vestige of glamour from the mind of the individual, who, upon the previous night, was so strongly impressed with the wonderful realism of the battle scene in "Burmah."

This battle scene, of which, of course, the horse is the climax, creates no little excitement upon the stage itself, but of a very different order from that which evolves a breathless audience. There are a number of colored men, at least they are black enough for the occasion, and they represent the Burmese warriors. Their costumes are of the tropical variety, consisting of a turban and some garments which resemble abbreviated bloomers more than anything else. These people are supers, of course, and the stage manager has a very hard time of it, every night, explaining to them the necessity of these airy costumes, and the fact that their rings and watches are not considered au fait in the jungle. After a while this is accomplished, and the soldiers make their entrance.

If the visitor keeps his eye on the property room, he will presently see a man emerge, carrying what looks like an overgrown revolver on stilts. But it isn't—it is the famous Maxime gun, which can discharge 600 shots in a minute. Just to look at it, it doesn't appear to be very much of a gun, but after its attendant gets it to the front, and it begins to speak—at the rate of 600 words a minute—your opinion changes, and you are inspired with a decided respect for it. There is nothing bogus about this gun at all. It simply fires blank cartridges. In all other respects, its action is similar to what it would be in battle.

After the gun has had its turn, after the horse makes his trip up the hillside and his jump, after the colored gentlemen with abbreviated bloomers have been slain with smokeless powder, a lull comes in the hurly-burly behind the scenes. The evidences of battle are banished as rapidly as the stage hands can put them out of sight. Cupid succeeds Mars in the play. Some chapel walls appear from mysterious sources, pews from another, and the church is complete. All that is lacking is a marriage ceremony, which promptly appears. Somebody with a buzz-saw sailor hat on, over in the left wings, plays "Lohengrin," which is equivalent in "Burmah," to "lights out." One must be nothing, if not strictly military, in "Burmah."

All in all, it reminds one of nothing so much as that hackneyed phrase, before and after taking, only in this instance, the illusion is before; dull prosaic fact afterward.

AN EDUCATED HAWK.

Here Is a Bird in Orange County, This State, Which Brings in a Herd of 75 Cows Every Evening.

Two miles north of the little town of Oxford, in Orange County, this State, James Cloyd owns a farm which borders on the road to Blooming Grove. He is the owner of what is probably the most remarkable hawk in the world.

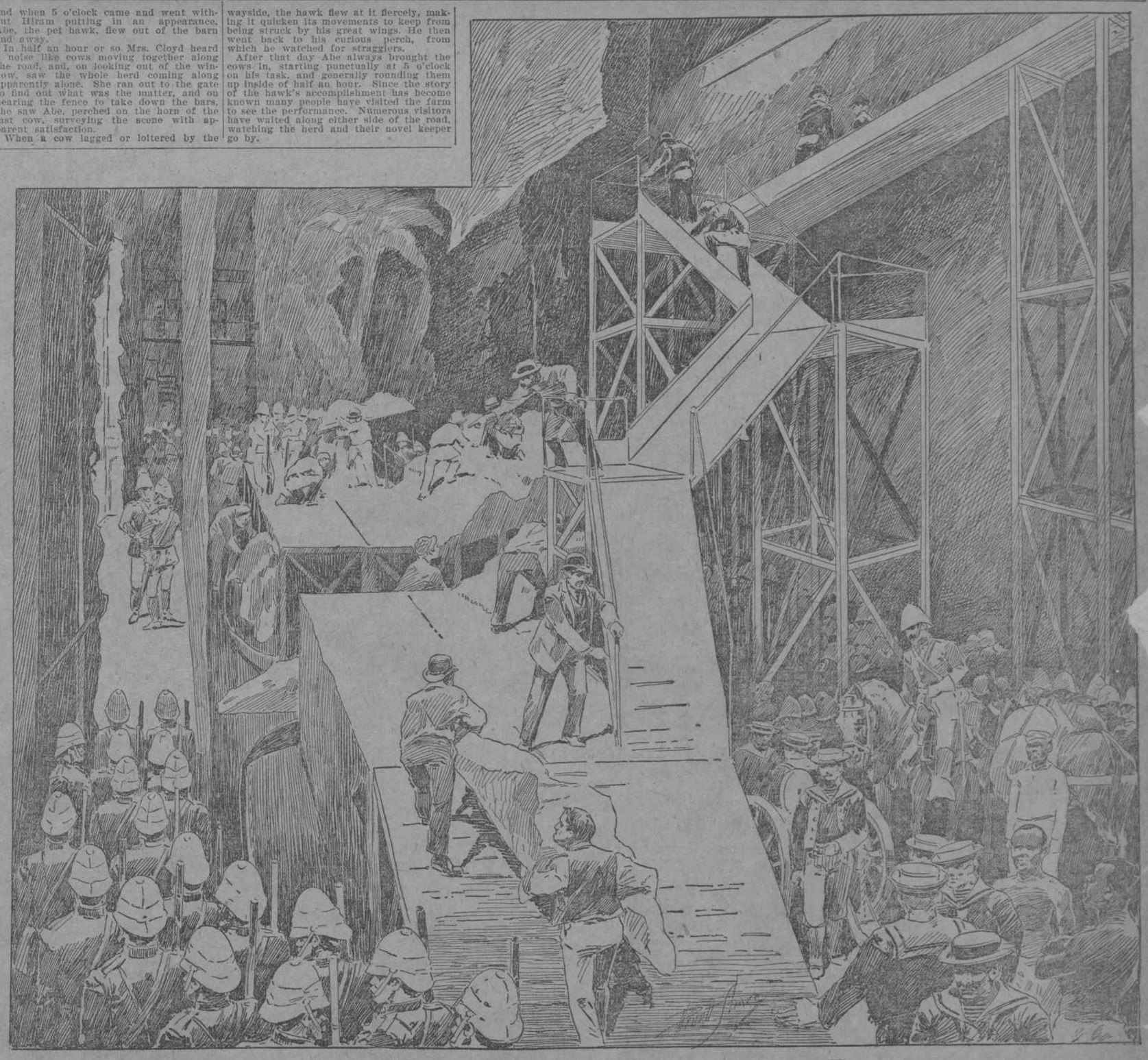
This hawk brings home a herd of seventy-five cows every evening, and gathers in the stragglers and keeps the herd together even more effectually than Hiram Cloyd, the son of the farmer, used to do. Hiram had killed the parent hawk, which had been stealing chickens, and took this one from the nest. As it grew up he made it a pet and took it with him every evening when he went out to bring the cows in.

One day Hiram cut his foot so that he could not walk. His father was absent, and when 5 o'clock came and went without Hiram putting in an appearance, Abe, the pet hawk, flew out of the barn and away.

In half an hour or so Mrs. Cloyd heard a noise like cows moving together along the road, and, on looking out of the window, saw the whole herd coming along apparently alone. She ran out to the gate to find out what was the matter, and on nearing the fence to take down the bars, she saw Abe, perched on the horn of the last cow, surveying the scene with apparent satisfaction.

When a cow lagged or loitered by the wayside, the hawk flew at it fiercely, making it quicken its movements to keep from being struck by his great wings. He then went back to his curious perch, from which he watched for stragglers.

After that day Abe always brought the cows in, starting punctually at 5 o'clock on his task, and generally rounding them up inside of half an hour. Since the story of the hawk's accomplishment has become known many people have visited the farm to see the performance. Numerous visitors have waited along either side of the road, watching the herd and their novel keeper go by.



The Battle Scene of "Burmah" at the American Theatre.
From Behind the Scenes.

As Seen from the Audience.

English Actors and Plays.

Notes of Players Across the Sea Who Are Familiar to Us.

The English companies that came over here this season for a twenty weeks' sojourn are thinking of home and mamma. "The Shop Girl," which will be seen this week in Harlem, will sail for England after a couple of subsequent weeks in Philadelphia. Three or four of its members, including the affable Grossmith, will return to the London "Shop Girl," which is still popular in the English metropolis. "The Artist's Model," after an engagement in Chicago, will set forth for Liverpool, and "His Excellency," after a three weeks' run in Boston, will also return to Albion.

Of these three companies "The Shop Girl" is the only one that will return. The musical comedy has been apparently eminently successful, and it will come back to visit those cities that have not yet listened to "Beautiful, Bountiful Bertie" and "Love on the Japanese Plan."

By and bye, "The Shop Girl's" successor in London is to be called "The Tea Girl," and George Edwardes, who believes in girls of this description, will put it on at Daly's Leicester Square Theatre. In the cast will be Marie Tempest, Decima Moore and Hayden Coffin, all of whom New Yorkers know very well indeed. Mr. Daly has the "call" upon "The Tea Girl" for America, and it is quite likely that it will come to his Broadway playhouse next September—without Marie Tempest and Hayden Coffin. Musical comedy is still popular, and Americans have submitted to it because it is many degrees more desirable than farce comedy, which, with the exception of the exceedingly entertaining "Black Sheep," is "kind of" dead.

Marie Tempest, by the bye, has one of her little Japanese eyes cast longingly at America. Don't imagine for an instant that she has settled down chubbily to inferior parts in musical comedies in London. Miss Tempest is waiting patiently for the production at the Savoy Theatre of the new Gilbert & Sullivan opera, the presentation of which has been delayed by the phenomenal success of the revival of "The Mikado." Miss Tempest is going to "consider" this opera for America. You see, people have now come to "consider" Gilbert & Sullivan's operas, whereas a few years ago managers bought them pig-in-a-poke style. If the new work contains a good part for Miss Tempest, she will bring the opera to America, and tell us once again how much she loves us and how New York audiences are the only audiences in the world for her. One of her recent utterances was "I am willing to play small parts in England, but in America—not on your life."

Sir Gus 'Arris is right in front again. You can't see him just now. You can't get even a glimpse of that famous white waistcoat and that ineffable reach-me-down-that-style-$9 suit of clothes. Still he is right in front again, as I remarked before. After visiting this country in propria persona (a phrase which to Sir Gus would probably mean "in personal propriety") the titled manager discovered that he could not succeed in placing his latest Drury Lane melodrama, "Cheer, Boys, Cheer." He negotiated with several managers, who, willing at first, grew chilled and repellant when they heard that the production would involve an outlay of $25,000. Such sums are not knocking about managerial offices in this city, and Sir Gus went back to London with his white waistcoat, his $9 suit of clothes and all his secretaries.

He then entered into negotiations with himself, and it is now announced that he has at last arranged with himself to produce "Cheer, Boys, Cheer!" in this country in such a manner as to make home managers green with the exquisite verdure of a rich envy. Instead of sending his scenery to Manchester, or Birmingham, or Leeds, he will pack it up and cause it to set sail for New York. He will also bring over a crew of English actors. Sir Gus declined to wax enthusiastic over the cast of "The Sporting Duchess" at the Academy of Music, so he will import a cast made up of his own bright and winsome selections, examples of which we saw in his production of "Hansel and Gretel," at Daly's Theatre. American actors are highly indignant at this scheme, which has already been whispered around, but Sir Gus is a doughty knight, and he is not to be deterred by trifling obstacles. Although Americans laughed at him when he was here last, Sir Gus still loves them. They were naughty, frivolous children last year, not to be taken seriously. Sir Gus will try again, and they do say that he will not be accompanied by a white waistcoat; also, that in order to cut a more presentable appearance, he will order his clothes on the Bowery as soon as he arrives. ALAN DALE.

COLLECTING BRAINS.

Progress Which Is Being Made at Cornell University in Acquiring Human Brains for Study.

A second circular has been issued by Dr. Wilder, of Cornell University, who is president of what is called "The Cornell Brain Association." It seeks to induce educated and eminent persons to bequeath at death their brains for scientific examination and the benefit of mankind.

A blank form of bequest, and a circular fully explaining the beneficent objects of the association, have been sent to hundreds of men and women acknowledged leaders in the literary, artistic and scientific world. The association has up to date eight brains, and has the promise of twenty-five more, which are at present in use by their owners. It is said that contributions of brains will be made by Mrs. McGee, daughter of Simon Newcomb, the astronomer, and Thomas K. Beecher, of Elmira, in addition to the members of the association.

HUNTING THE CUSTOMER.

How Wholesale Houses Imitate Baxter Street Stores on a Somewhat Larger Scale.

One of the odd features of metropolitan life are the "pullers-in" of the wholesale dry goods and carpet districts that centre in that big strip of land between Canal and Duane streets and a couple of blocks east and west of Broadway. It is not the athletic and persuasive "pulling in" of Baxter and Division streets, so historic in the annals of the town, but a milder form of the genus.

Wholesale trade in these lines and in this section is one of keen competition, and every salesman has to look his sharpest to keep his customers away from the blandishments of his rivals' employes. The main thing is to get an out-of-town buyer, one of the big country merchants, into an establishment, set him down in a comfortable chair, chat with him over a cigar, and show him pieces of goods. Then it is easy to do business. But the thing is first to catch the bird.

The majority of the big houses send out their salesmen into all the near-by country towns, but once in a while these men fail to make connections with the rural merchant, simply because they do not happen to be on hand when is in a buying mood. In that event the merchant oftentimes finds it convenient to take a hurried run into the city, and he comes when he is least expected.

It is because of this frequently happening that it has become a custom of many of the "drummers" of the trades mentioned to spend a good part of the days that they are not "on the road" in staying outside of their establishments, keeping a careful watch on both sides of the street for familiar faces from the towns near New York.

Quite a large proportion of these "drummers" are paid salary and commission both; that is, if they are good men, they get a small guarantee yearly, and then a commission on all their sales.

So salesman after salesman along these streets has his eyes wide open for the passers-by, and when he descries a man he knows he pounces upon him with hospitality mirrored in his face, with his eyes sparkling, and as he clasps the town merchant's hand he says: "Why, come right in, Mr. Jones. We're glad to see you. Did you get to New York this morning? Come and have a seat by the stove and smoke a cigar with me. I've got some new patterns I've just been saving to show you. You and I'll hang around here a little while and then we'll go and have a snifter and a little lunch."

If the customer is a pretty big merchant and if his trade is worth it the salesman will presently say: "That's a great show we've got uptown at the Blank Theatre. Lucky you happened around to-day. Won't need to go back to-night, will you? I was going up there this evening myself, and you're just the man I'd like to go along with."

Then, with the smile still on his face, he proceeds to sell the rural merchant a large-sized bill, while the rival salesman across the street thinks things that would not look well in print.